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## CAPT. JOHN SOWERS BROOKS.

GEN. JOHN E. ROLLER.

This distinguished but ill-fated young soldier was born in the town of Staunton, in the State of Virginia, on the 31st of January, 1814. He came of that old Scotch-Irish Covenanter stock which has furnished so many heroes for American history in the various struggles for liberty that have taken place upon the soil of this continent, from the wars of colonial times to the present day.

His mother, who gave to him his gentle yet chivalric spirit, was a woman much loved and admired in her day for her strength of character, associated—as it was—with a charming person and engaging manners. She was married in the first place to John Henry, a member of a family ever held in high repute in the Old Dominion, by whom she had two children. One, Dr. Richard Hendricks Henry, of Waynesboro, Va., died on the 13th of December, 1846, leaving a memory behind him as fragrant as that of the “Doctor of the Old School” of Ian MacLaren. John Henry died on the 9th of August, 1800, and some ten years later his widow was sought in marriage by Absalom H. Brooks. From their marriage in 1810, five children were born, towit: Norborne C. Brooks, who for many years was post master of the city of Staunton, and died beloved and lamented; Mary A. Brooks, who was married to Charles Wortham Reins, of Richmond, Va., in 1834, and whose son, John Malcolm Reins, now of Winnepeg, Canada, was one of “the bravest of the brave,” a gallant member of the 5th Virginia Regiment of the famous Stonewall Brigade. Another daughter died unmarried, while a fourth, Miss Henrietta Brooks still survives aged nearly eighty. Her adopted daughter, Josepha Brooks Richardson, a niece of Gen. John E. Roller, of Virginia (a Confederate Veteran), of Col. O. B. Roller (of the 2d Virginia Regular United States Volunteers in the war with Spain), and of the Rev. R. D. Roller, D. D. (rector of the Episcopal church, at Charleston, Kanawha, West Virginia), is the wife of Channing B. Cornell, the nephew of Gov. Alonzo B. Cornell, of New York, and

grandson of Ezra Cornell, the founder of Cornell University at Ithaca. The last survivor of the Brooks family makes her home with this adopted child.

The papers and letters printed with this sketch are original documents of historical value. They serve to illustrate an important chapter in the history of Texas, and to show to her sons and daughters for all time, the patriotism and heroism of the men who died that she might be free. The documents are the following:

(1) An official copy of the descriptive list of John Sowers Brooks upon his enlistment in the United States Corps of Marines, and showing, also, his promotion in that service.

(2) Letter to his brother dated August 12, 1835, and one to his father dated November 4, 1835, announcing his purpose to enlist in the "Rebel Army" of Texas.

(3) Letters to James Hagarty, dated July 10, 1835, August 13, 1835, and August 19, 1835, of the same purport.

(4) Letters of Captain Brooks to his family from the time of his arrival at Velasco, Texas, about the 23d of December, 1835, to the time he was disabled by a severe wound in the battle of Coleto, March 14, 1836.

(5) Letter of William Christy, dated June 4, 1836, confirming the news of the death of Captain Brooks.

(6) Letter of Gen. Sam Houston, dated June 26, 1836, to the same effect.

(7) Letter of Capt. Jack Shackelford, of the "Red Rovers," dated August 5, 1836, to the same effect.

(8) Two letters of Dr. Joseph L. Field, dated September 2, 1836, and October 7, 1836, respectively, also giving further particulars.

(9) Letter of John D. McLeod, dated January 30, 1837, giving further particulars in regard to his fate.

(10) Extracts from the "Staunton Spectator," upon which paper Captain Brooks was a compositor and to whose columns he frequently contributed. These show the great doubt and uncertainty that existed for some time, among his friends, as to the tragic termination of his life. It is said that his mother, as long as she lived, never did give up the hope that he would some day

return, and every year knit new stockings for him with her own hands.

The hope is indulged that the publication of these papers will serve to embalm for future ages, the memory and fame of as chivalric a spirit as ever graced the earth, and of whom, owing to the modesty of his relatives and friends, but little has been known in Texas.

1.

*The descriptive list of John S. Brooks, as given by the Hon. John Boyle, Acting Secretary of the Navy, June 12, 1835, is as follows:*

JOHN S. BROOKS, A CORPORAL, born in the United States, County of Augusta, State of Virginia, aged nineteen years, five feet, nine inches high, of a sandy complexion, red hair, blue eyes, and by trade or occupation, a farmer, was enlisted at Charlestown, Mass, by Bvt. Lt. Col. Freeman, on the 19th day of September, 1834, for four years.

REMARKS.

Promoted Corpl. 25th Feb. 1835. Now on board Frigate Constitution.

P. G. HOLLE,  
Adj. and Insp.

Head Quarters of the Marine Corps.  
Adjutant and Inspector's Office.  
Washington, 12th June, 1835.

2.

Marine Barracks, Brooklyn, Aug. 12th/35.

My Dear Brother:—I received your letter of the 5th inst. to-day and hasten to answer it immediately; and I do it with the greatest pleasure, as I have tidings to communicate which will, doubtless, be very acceptable to Father—for he will be spared some trouble and anxiety, which I understand he is about to take in procuring my discharge. Any further application for that purpose will be supererogatory. Soon after the date of my last letter, I wrote to Col. Henderson, Commandant of Marines, and in as neat and handsome a manner as was possible in the present disordered condition of my intellects, requested my discharge from the Corps, which he



has the honor to command. I referred to several reasons as the grounds of my application, among which was my ill-health, and general dissatisfaction with the service. A reply has been received, by which I am informed that I am to be discharged. As a necessary preparatory measure, my clothing returns, and other accounts, will be transmitted to Head Quarters, and as soon as they can be adjusted, my discharge will be forwarded to this station, and I will be released from the service. This will probably require ten or twelve days—and possibly longer. A soldier, specially discharged, as is the case with myself, is required to pay for all the clothing he has received from the Government; but the pay now due me will be sufficient for that purpose. However, if it should not, I will remain in the service until I am able to leave it in an honorable manner. My pay is nine dollars per month; and a little frugality will soon enable me to discharge my arrears, should there be any, which I very much doubt.

Although I have procured my discharge, and feel all that pleasure that naturally arises from the consciousness of being released from a galling bondage, yet I cannot avoid entertaining the melancholy conviction that my prospects are as gloomy and uncertain as ever. What shall I do? I have forgotten nearly all the little knowledge which I acquired at the Printing Business. I cannot labor,—I will not beg,—and have no idea of starving. I have now been near eleven months in the United States service, and profess to have some knowledge of company and battalion drill. Indeed they are the only things I ever acquired with anything like ordinary facility; and my habits, from actual service, and a predisposition for that mode of life, have acquired so much of a military cast, as to render me almost unfit for any other occupation. There is a strong probability of a rupture between the Mexican Government and the Province of Texas. The people of the latter have established a provisional government, which step, I presume, will be followed by a declaration of independence. The Mexicans have embodied troops, which are now marching upon the colonists. Col. Austin is a prisoner in the City of Mexico; and I can perceive nothing in the aspect of their affairs to prevent the contest, which this state of things predicts. There is then some hope, of my finding active employment in a military capacity there; and from

my knowledge of the American system of tactics, and the necessarily disorganized condition of any forces which the Province can embody, it will not be difficult, I think, to attain a more elevated station than that I now occupy. My services as a drill master would be valuable; and in the event of a war, I am sanguine enough to believe that I will soon entitle myself to a commission. I infer from your letter, that I cannot obtain appointment in the Navy and I can conceive of no other resource in my present condition. I will therefore probably go to Texas.

In reply to your inquiry, I will say that I received \$10 from Mr. Hagarty, which, he informs me, was from Father. I neglected, but not through ingratitude, to return my thanks for this opportune donation. Father will pardon my forgetfulness, when he recollects my confusion and distress of mind.

When Mr. Hagarty visited me, as I have before informed you, he told me to write to him, and apprise him of my situation and my wishes relative to it. I complied with his request promptly, writing to him the next day, as the earliest opportunity. I have not heard from him since. I will embrace the first chance of telling him that I have procured my discharge.

Give to the gentlemen, who have so generously interested themselves in my behalf, my sincerest thanks and best wishes for their prosperity and happiness. It is my duty, and it will be my highest gratification, to acknowledge their kindnesses individually, by letter, as soon as I possibly can. I have but a few moments of time each day to myself. There are but three Corporals on the station, and so many recruits to drill, that their time is entirely occupied by duty.

Tell Mother I will write to her in a day or two, when I will comply with her request in relation to Mr. Heiskell. His kindness has made a deep impression on my heart, and not the less so because his generous exertions in my favor, were not crowned with success. I can never forget it; and if my prayers will avail, he will live long and happily in this world, of which I am so weary. Tell R. Williamson and L. T. M. Fackler to write to me. I will expect letters to [*sic.*] them. I have been looking for a letter from Mary Ann, and also from Father. How is Richard and his family? Remember me to all who inquire for me. Give my love to all

the family. I will answer your enquiries as to where I have been et cetera, in my next letter. Excuse this, as I have no time to read it over.

It is almost Tattoo—I have been very much hurried in writing this letter, and have scarcely time to fold it. I have much to say, which I am compelled to defer to another opportunity.

Your brother,

JOHN SOWERS BROOKS.

(Post Marked, Brooklyn, N. Y. Aug. 13. Addressed, Norborne C. Brooks, Staunton, Augusta County, Virginia).

New York, Nov. 4, 1835.

My Dear Father:—Ere this letter shall have reached you, I will be once more on the billows of the Atlantic. To-morrow morning, I embark on board the schooner *America*, bound for the port of Brazoria, for the purpose of volunteering in the "Rebel Army" of Texas. I have not taken this important step, my dear Father, without the most anxious and deliberate reflection upon the probable consequences. Experience has taught me the dangers of the sea, and particularly the Gulf of Mexico, in light vessels; and I am not blind to the possibility that exists of our being captured by a Mexican man-of-war, or Revenue Cutter,—and consequently of finding my military ardor circumscribed to the sphere of one of their prison-walls, instead of the wide field of a Texian Campaign. I know the hardships, privations, and dangers a soldier must incur; and I well know too, from personal observation, that the effect upon the character and disposition of a long habituation to the rules of military life and the customs of war, is more to be dreaded than even the peril of "life and limb." I have given all these circumstances my calmest consideration, and the result is a determination to volunteer in defence of the holy rights for which Texas is now contending. If I have erred, it is surely an error for which the heart of every American will suggest an apology; and I trust, my dear Father, that you will not view my conduct with that displeasure which a superficial or hasty glance at the reasons which have impelled me to it, might perhaps excite.

I have neither talent nor inclination for business; and you know that my habit of thought and my education have strongly predis-

posed me for a military life. It has always been my desire to enter the Navy, Army or Marine Corps of the United States. That wish has hitherto been frustrated; and there seems now no probability, however remote, that it can be effected. Texas opens a wide and variegated field to the ambition and enterprise of the soldier of fortune. But I have no hope of distinction there—for I cannot believe that the evil fortune which has so long pursued me will not still assert its claim to control my wayward destiny. I trust I have a holier motive than mere ambition, for abandoning my native country and the pleasures of social life, to encounter the dangers and turmoils of war in a foreign land. There is something in the cause of the Texanians that comes home to the heart of every true American. Its near similarity to the glorious struggle of our own ancestors in "Seventy-six" must produce a sympathy for them in every part of the Union, which will result in something more than mere kind wishes, for their success. I hope and believe that there are many of the youths of our country who have inherited enough of the spirit of their fore-fathers to induce them to procure, like myself, a musket and a hundred rounds of ball cartridge, and join the holy crusade against priestly tyranny and military despotism.

I feel a deep and abiding interest in the success of Texas and her people. They are our own countrymen, who have been seduced from their native soil to settle in a distant land, under the most solemn assurances of protection and support. Those assurances are now to be violated and revoked, even at the expense of the plighted faith of a nation, and they are to be driven from the soil which they have made their own, by the "sweat of the brow." Their Republican form of Government, their local Legislature, their Municipal Law, and their sovereignty and distinction as a State, or integral and component part of a Federal Republic, is to be destroyed at one ruthless blow. Will America permit it?

Our vessel will lay-off the mouth of the Mississippi for intelligence. If we find the coast in the hands of the Mexicans, or strictly blockaded by their Cutters, we will proceed to New Orleans, and I will make my way by land to the interior of Texas. If, however, there should be a possibility of eluding their vigilance we will move at once into Brazoria, where we will be safe. If some of the family should write immediately upon the receipt of this,

it is possible that I will get the letter in New Orleans. If I go there, I will wait a day or two for that purpose.

The Schooner mounts a nine-pounder, on a pivot, and the crew are provided with small arms. I have a musket and a hundred ball cartridges.

Give my love to Mother and all the family.

Your affectionate son,

JOHN SOWERS BROOKS.

P. S. And now, My dear Father, if you should never see me again, for the fate of battles is uncertain, and it may be my lot to fall in a foreign land, I hope you will forget all my errors and follies, and believe, as I assure you, that I have never for a moment forgotten your kindness or affection or that of my dear Mother. Often have I sighed to see you all before I go—but that cannot be—and when I reflect how possible it is, that I may never see you again in this world, I love you with an affection so intense that it almost breaks my heart. But—Farewell—I hope not forever.

BROOKS.

My health is very good—I take this step unknown to any one and without advice or permission. Mr. Hagarty has not seen me for some days, and does not know where I am. I will leave a note behind for him.—BROOKS.

Tell Norborne and Mary Ann to write to me, and Hannah and Henrietta might add postscripts. If A. St. C. Boys is in Staunton, tell N. to ask him to write to me. Direct, Brazoria, Austin's Colony, Texas.

BROOKS.

(Post-marked New York, Nov. 4. Addressed, Mr. A. H. Brooks, Staunton, Augusta Co., Virginia.)

3.

Marine Barracks, Brooklyn, July 30, 1835.

To James Hagarty, Esq.

Dear Sir:—Although I did not express the gratitude which your visit yesterday excited in my bosom, yet believe me, I appreciate most fully the kindly feelings that must have prompted it. That

you have taken an interest in the wayward destinies of an unhappy wanderer, as deep as that you have manifested towards me, is but another claim to my admiring esteem, and will serve to fix more indelibly on my heart the impression which your kindness has already made upon it. It may have occurred to you, that I have made but a poor return for your benevolence, and that my thanks were but coldly and slightly expressed. But, sir, there is an apology for me, to which I deem it due to myself to advert. While I am endowed with the faculty of writing with tolerable facility, I am denied even the ordinary colloquial powers, and find it extremely embarrassing to maintain a conversation on the most common topic. This defect I am conscious arises more from a kind of timidity, which I have in vain endeavored to overcome, than from absolute absence of words. But, although I do not evince that voluble gratitude we so often see, yet I feel as deeply, and perhaps more deeply, than those who resort to that method of requiting their obligations.

You desire to know my wishes with regard to my future course. I will tell you frankly—for your noble-hearted generosity to me demands, and shall receive, the most explicit answer I am capable of making. My situation in the Marine Corps is as disagreeable as it can possibly be. The men who compose it; and with whom I must necessarily associate in a certain degree, possess habits, passions, and feelings with which I can never sympathize. Indeed I was alone even on the crowded decks of a man-of-war and felt as desolate as I could have possibly done in the midst of the dreary Sahara of Africa or the boundless forests of Oregon. I have not one feeling in common with most of them, and consequently can receive no pleasure from their society. My life is perfectly miserable; and can it be wondered, if I desire, most anxiously desire, to be released from my bondage? It is now the main purpose of my life, the darling object of my pursuit, to obtain my discharge, and apply myself to some honest and honorable avocation. My attention was, for a short time, turned to the art of composing, and I had arrived to a tolerable proficiency, when I was compelled to abandon it from an apprehension of injury to my health. I am willing, however, to resume it, and to incur any risk, rather than remain in my present degraded situation. I submit myself entirely

to your guidance. Whatever pursuit you point me to, I will unhesitatingly adopt. It is true, I have my preferences; but my conduct has not been such as to entitle me to indulge them. If I can only be released, and find some honorable employment which will afford me an opportunity of rendering myself again worthy of the affection of my parents and other relatives, my ambition shall be satisfied. I am aware of the difficulties in my path; but I think I have energy and perseverance sufficient to surmount them. My hand writing is not as good as it has formerly been. It has been long since I have exercised it; and it is not always possible for a soldier to procure the best materials.

I received a letter from my father, on yesterday which I immediately answered. In it he referred to the expressions which Col. Peyton and Messrs Kinney and Michie are making in my behalf.

A warrant in the Navy, or a commission in the Marine Corps, would either of them be a desirable position for me. But I fear that neither can be procured now. My proclivity, if I have ever developed any, is decidedly military. I conceive it to be the only pursuit for which I am at all calculated. But, although I may not possess natural talent for business, I think that stern and untiring application will avail to [over] come the abstacles which are likely to obstruct my progress. At all events, I am willing to exert every power, both mental and physical; with which I am endowed to make myself useful and respectable, to regain my self-esteem, and to elicit the approbation of my friends. Permit me to thank you—for the interest which you have taken in my behalf. Your kindness has made an impression, deep and abiding on my heart, so that time can not efface it. But I will not weary you with my professions of gratitude—a feeling which is better evinced by deeds.

Any notice of this hasty scrawl will be gratefully received.

Most respectfully,

JOHN SOWERS BROOKS.

(Post-marked New York, July 31.)

U. S. M. Brks. Brooklyn, August 13th, 1835.

To James Hagarty, Esq.

Dear Sir:—I received yesterday a letter from my brother, in which he informed me that application was about to be made for

my discharge; and that you had generously expressed a determination to interest yourself in procuring it. It gives me pleasure to tell you, that any further exertion with that view will be entirely supererogatory. Encouraged by the success of others in numerous instances, and the well-known kindness of the Commandant of Marines, I wrote to him soon after your visit to me; and in as handsome a manner as the disordered condition of my intellects would permit, requested my discharge from the Corps. I referred to several reasons as the grounds of my application,—among which, the most prominent were, the fact of my minority at the period of my enlistment, my ill-health and general dissatisfaction with the service. A reply was received, by which I was apprised that the Colonel had acceded to my request. As a necessary preparatory measure, my clothing, returns, and other accounts, will be transmitted to Head Quarters, and as soon as they can be adjusted, my discharge will be forwarded to this station, and I will thus be released from the most servile bondage. A soldier specially discharged, as will be the case with myself, is required to pay for all the clothing he has received from the Government. The pay due me, added to a small sum which I now possess, will be sufficient to accomplish this purpose. If, however, it should not, I will remain a short time longer, in order that I may be enabled to leave the service in an honorable manner.

I wrote to you, according to promise, stating my anxiety to be released, and to pursue any honorable avocation for which my habits and education might most adapt me. That letter was directed to No. 26, Broad Street, and sent to the Post Office in New York. I presume you have received it.

Pardon this hasty scrawl. I have had but a few moments to devote to it.

Your obliged Sev't.

JOHN SOWERS BROOKS.

(*Addressed James Hagarty, Esq., 26 Broad St., New York.*)

Brooklyn, August 19, 1835.

To James Hagarty, Esq.,

Dear Sir:—I was yesterday favored with my discharge from the United States Marine Corps, and am now free from the obligation which my oath of enlistment imposed. While I must acknowledge the extreme gratification I derive from the consciousness of being



once more free and unshackled, yet I cannot forbear entertaining the melancholy conviction that my prospects are as gloomy as ever. My ingenuity can suggest no scheme, likely to be successful in its results, to which I may resort for the purpose of procuring an honest subsistence. I acquired but an imperfect knowledge of the art of printing; and it has now been so long since I exercised even that little knowledge, that I fear it will be deemed presumption in me to enquire for employment as a compositor. But whatever may be the struggles to which I am doomed, I shall ever feel gratified for having escaped the miseries of four years' servitude in the Marine Corps; and I shall never forget the benevolent kindness which prompted you to interest yourself in the behalf of a poor, wayward boy. I cannot but think that honest exertion will be followed by its appropriate reward, and that persevering industry will finally conduct me to a reasonable position in society. It is this consideration that gives me courage, and induces me to hope even amidst the circumstances of gloom by which I am surrounded. It does not seem to me that my lot has been a hard one. While I have ever cherished the most glowing ambition to attain a situation of respectability, untoward accidents have always restrained my advance and prostrated me even lower than my gloomiest forbodings could anticipate. It is true, I must confess, that a candid and careful investigation of my misfortunes, has led me to the humiliating conviction, that my own faults and follies were their chief causes. And, while I make this admission, so derogatory to myself, it becomes me, in justice to my own feelings, to say, that there were circumstances which I could not control, that exercised no inconsiderable degree of influence over my unhappy career. It would be painful for me to advert to these circumstances, and, as they have long since ceased to possess the influence which they once exerted, I permit myself to hope that you will not require a more comprehensible allusion to them.

Since your visit to me I have written to you twice. My first letter was a compliance with your request for a full disclosure of my situation, and my wishes relating to it. The second was in relation to my discharge. I informed you that I had applied to the Commandant of Marines, enclosing him a Surgeon's Certificate of my ill-health, and that he had consented to discharge me on the

usual conditions of a special discharge. Since the date of that letter my discharge has arrived, and was handed to me yesterday, after a settlement of my accounts. Not having been a year in the service and having drawn a years' clothing, I consequently had much of to pay for. The pay due me from Government, with a small sum which I possessed, was sufficient for this, leaving me twelve dollars which is all I now possess in the world. I left the Barracks this morning, and have procured cheap boarding at a respectable house, as far as I can see, in Brooklyn. I will remain here until I see what will be best for me to do. A few days, however, must determine. What do you think of Texas? Is there not some prospect in that country, in its present unsettled state, for one who has some knowledge of the American system of tactics. I respectfully solicit your advice, and shall be guided entirely by it.

Yours respectfully,

JOHN SOWERS BROOKS.

Mr. James Hagarty, No. 26 Broad Street.

4.

*Letter to A. H. Brooks, Staunton, Va.*

Velasco, Texas, 23rd December, 1835.

My dear father:—

The die is cast. I am over the Rubicon and my fate is now inseparably connected with that of Texas. I have resolved to stand by her to the last and in a word, to sink or swim with her. Permit me to entreat you to suffer no unnecessary uneasiness about my situation. From what I have learned since my arrival here, I do not consider the service extraordinarily dangerous. We have to contend with a mercenary foe who has no other inducement to fight than the hope of gain, and who is moreover, taught from his infancy, to dread the very name of a North American. San Antonio de Bexar has been carried by assault and Gen. Cos and six or seven hundred of his men are now prisoners to the gallant Texians, who so nobly sustained the honor of their country on that occasion. Several other engagements have occurred in all of which, the invincible Yankees triumphed and invariably with in-

considerable loss. There is now not a single Mexican soldier within the borders of Texas, exclusive of prisoners. The people have organized a provisional government and appointed a Governor, Lieut Governor and Legislative Council, with the other requisite functionaries. Their authority is to cease in March next when the General Consultation of all Texas is to meet and constitute some more permanent form of Government. All is confusion,—but many warm hearts and wise heads are energetically engaged in reducing this chaos to order and we hope ere long, to see Texas enjoying all the advantages and blessings of a firm and stable administration of such laws as the wisdom of her rulers may suggest. She is now a disjointed fragment of the Republic of Mexico, and the blood of thousands will be shed, ere the haughty tyrant of that worse than despotism, again rivets his chains upon free born Americans.

I have been appointed Adjutant of a Regiment with the assurance that the Commission of Lieutenant and Adjutant will be issued to me in a few days. In order to make this respectable situation secure to me, I hope my dear Father, you will make a little exertion and procure me the recommendations of Gen Baldwin, Col. Peyton, Wm. Kinney, Esq., Erasmus Stribling, Thos. J. Michie, Dr. Boys and Alex H. H. Stuart, Esqrs. and such other prominent gentlemen of Staunton as may be disposed to favor me with their testimonials of my character. Their letters may be directed to Gen. Houston or to Col. Fannin in Velasco, Texas, or to myself on an envelope containing their address. The letters must be postpaid in Staunton to New Orleans by you or they will never reach here and you had better write a request on the outside to the Post Master in the latter place, to forward them to Velasco without delay. It would be a great advancement of my interests if you would not lose a moment in complying with the above request.

I am at present stationed at Velasco, a small town at the mouth of the Rio Brazos de Dios. There are about 250 men assembled here and tomorrow I commence the tedious duty of drilling recruits. As soon as we are organized, and reach something like a state of discipline, it is contemplated to reinforce us and then detach us to attack the city of Metamoras in the State of Tamaulipas.

This will be the commencement of a regular and systematic invasion of Mexico and I trust I shall live to see it end beneath the walls of the Capitol of Santa Anna's iron ruled dominions, that we will ultimately succeed, I can not entertain a doubt. I know too well the materials of which our army is composed to think for a moment that they will flinch in the hour of peril. We are all animated by one spirit, defiance to tyrants—and our watch word is "Texas and Glory." Our war cry is Liberty or Death. We must triumph. I can not, I will not believe otherwise. Tell Mother to feel no alarm on my account. Tell her to reflect that I am in the hands of an all wise being and the God of Battles will dispense to me whatever fate he may deem my due, and be assured, my dear father, and my dear mother, that I will never disgrace either the name of a soldier or that of a Virginian. You shall never blush for your wayward boy's conduct on the field of battle.

I forgot to tell you that I arrived here the 20th of this month. The vessel in which I sailed from New York, the Schooner, *America*, was wrecked away on the Brazos Bar, and we escaped from the wreck in an open boat with the utmost difficulty to another vessel that lay securely outside the tremendous breakers which dash along the coast in a gale of wind from the North. As soon as the vessel struck and began to fill, the sailors seized upon the liquors and soon became intoxicated and by threats and violence, only, could we force them into the boat. I shall never forget that long weary night of terror and dismay, but I will give you the particulars in a future letter. We were a month and ten days on the passage out and saw 80 whales. I have kept a journal since the 10th of Nov. with the exception of the last three days. I was compelled to leave most of my baggage aboard the wreck and if you could spare me a few dollars, it would be of great service to me. I will soon be in a condition to return it. We get 1100 acres of land as citizens, 600 for our services during the war, besides the pay, clothing and rations of a soldier.

Give my love to Norborne, Mary Ann, Hannah, and Henrietta, and to Richard and his family and tell them all to write to me. Be sure and get the letters of recommendation without delay. Good night.

Ever your affectionate son,

JOHN SOWERS BROOKS.

P. S. Perhaps some of the items of intelligence contained in

this letter, would be new to the readers of the Spectator, and you better give Mr. Harper a summary of them. Mr. Patterson's letter to Dr. Archer was received, and did me much service here. I feel greatly his debtor in gratitude for the favor so kindly conferred. I am in very good health and weigh much more than I did when I left home.

If Allan St. C. Boys, R. Williamson and Lt. M. Fackler are in Staunton, tell them to write to me. I write in the midst of the noise and confusion of a camp and have no time to read this over.

BROOKS.

(Mailed Velasco, 23d December, 1835. Post-marked New Orleans, Jan. 3.)

*Letter to Miss Mary Ann Brooks, Staunton, Va.*

Camp Independence, near Velasco, Texas, Jan. 8th, 1836.

My dear Sister,

I have just been informed that a vessel is about to sail from Velasco to New Orleans. I have but a moment to inform you that I am at present stationed at Camp Independence, three miles from the mouth of the Rio Brazos. I have the situation of Adjutant to about 200 volunteers, denominated the "Georgia Battalion of Permanent Volunteers." My duties here are arduous in the extreme. They are all perfectly raw. The laborious task of drilling all the officers from the major to the junior corporal in the elementary school of the soldier devolves upon Mr. Chadwick, Sergeant Major and myself. It is nothing but drill every day until I have become completely sick of it.

We expect to take up the line of march for Goliad towards the Mexican frontier on Monday, next, for the purpose of forming a junction with the main army under Gen. Houston and then going into the winter quarters. No expedition of importance is intended this winter. Our time will be chiefly employed in organizing and disciplining the army. It is however, proposed to attack the City of Metamoras with the Georgia Battalion, to which I am attached. If we succeed in taking it, my next letter will be dated from that place.

You have perhaps heard of the expedition to Tampico under

Gen. Mexia, who formerly distinguished himself in the Mexican service, but became dissatisfied and joined the Texians. They were compelled to retreat from the want of ammunition with the loss of 50 prisoners and we have just learned that they have all been shot by order of the Mexican authorities. This act of wanton barbarity will only bring so many more bayonets into the field against them. We have resolved to show them no quarter, should the chances of battle place them in our power.

It is said that Santa Ana is mustering 10,000 troops for the invasion of Texas, and that 1000 infantry and 500 cavalry are now on their way towards our frontier, breathing imprecations against all Americans, but particularly the Volunteers. They have hoisted a black flag as an indication that they will show no quarter. So much the better for us. We will not be burdened with prisoners.

It is apparent that there are two parties in this Country who indulge all the virulence of party spirit. One party is strongly in favor of an immediate Declaration of Independence and the other desires a non-politic course. They think that a declaration for the Constitution of 1824 will unite the Liberal party in Mexico with them and thus enable them to establish their independence ultimately with greater ease. There is undoubtedly policy in this course but it is such an one as I would not like to adopt. I am in favor of pursuing an open, bold and fearless course, such as a Virginian would feel it due to his character to pursue. An immediate Declaration of Independence would insure us the aid of every Liberal in the United States, either in men or money, and this temporizing policy, this fighting under the bush, I do not like. Our enemy is not invincible, our cause is good and at the worst, we can but die in defense of this little altar which we have erected to Liberty in the wilds of Texas. My heart is in this struggle. Every feeling and every sympathy, I possess, is enlisted in the cause and I feel that I can die, if necessary for its advancement, but I hope I shall live to see the termination of the war and to hear the terms of peace dictated by our victorious army from the Congress Hall of the City of Mexico.

In my letter to Father, dated Velasco, I gave some account of my disastrous voyage to Texas and ship wreck on the bar of the

Rio Brazos de Dios. I suppose you received that letter, and it is therefore unnecessary for me to recapitulate.

In conclusion, permit me to return through you to father and Mother, my sincerest thanks for their kindness to their erring child. If I die, remember me with kindness cherish every recollection that can atone for my errors, forgive my faults, forget my follies, breathe a sigh, and shed a tear to the memory of your unhappy brother, and believe that he will die as a soldier and a Virginian should, fearing nothing caring nothing.

Give my love to all the family.

Ever your brother,

JOHN SOWERS BROOKS.

P. S. Direct your letters to me to the care of Messrs. McKinney and Williams, Quintana, Mouth of the Brazos and they will forward them. I enclose you a Texas paper of a late date. Send me some Staunton papers.

JNO. S. BROOKS.

Write immediately. I have not heard from home since I left New York.

(Mailed—Camp Independence, near Velasco, Jan. 8th, 1836.  
Post-marked—New Orleans Jan 29.)

*Letter to A. H. Brooks, Staunton, Va.*

Camp Fannin, at Velasco, Texas, January 20th, 1836.

My dear father:—

The "Georgia Battalion of Permanent Volunteers," to which I am attached in the capacity of Adjutant will embark tomorrow morning on some vessels lying in the mouth of the Brazos and proceed to Copeno lower down the coast for the purpose of forming a junction with 6 or 700 other troops and then taking up the line of march for the invasion of Mexico. The expedition will consist of 1000 men and will be commanded by Gen. Houston or Col. Fannin. The first point of attack will be the City of Metamoras. It contains a population of from 15 to 20,000, (about one twentieth of whom are Americans) and is said to be wealthy and stored with public property to a vast amount. Two thirds of the inhabitants have manifested a preference for the "Liberals," as we

are called, and consequently are opposed to the misrule of Santa Ana and will probably aid our enterprise. Various rumors have reached us with regard to the state of preparation in Metamoras. It is said the City is well fortified and garrisoned with 4000 regulars. Another rumor leaves it almost defenceless and a third fixes its garrison at 1100 men. We will take with us only a small part of artillery and will be altogether unprepared to operate as a besieging army and therefore, if we find the first rumor correct, we will endeavor to force an entrance by assault and retreat if we fail.

The objects of this expedition appear to me to be not a systematic invasion of Mexico, but primarily to give employment to the Volunteers and lastly to secure if practicable, a foot hold in Mexico, to carry the war out of Texas and to sustain ourselves upon the enemies means until a more formidable and better concerted plan of invasion can be arranged. We are all enthusiastic in the cause and if ceaseless perseverance and indomitable courage can prevail, my fond hope of our success must be realized. Yet it is sad to think that there are some among us with hearts now beating high with expectation who will then hear the merry sound of their last reveillé. I may be one of that hapless number. I hope not, but if such is my fate, I will submit, without a murmur.

You would perhaps like to know some thing of the policies and present positions of parties in this country, for the wild malignant demon of party spirit has appeared here in its most virulent form. There are two parties—one of which is warmly in favor of a secession from Mexico, and a Declaration of Independence by the Convention which is to assemble in March. One portion of this party entertained the project of entering your Confederacy as an integral member of the Union. Another part, are desirous of selling the Country to the United States and thus enjoy the privileges of a free government, as a Territory without the expense until an increase of population and wealth has given them consequence sufficient to justify the assumption of a more exalted and responsible attitude as a constituent of the Federal Government. And a third portion are clamorous for the establishment of a separate and independent sovereignty. They argue with great plausibility that this course will produce confidence abroad and secure us aid in



men and money which could not otherwise be obtained. They say that if we succeed in maintaining an attitude of independence, the country will be populated with a rapidity unprecedented in the annals of emigration and that then her prosperity will essentially depend upon a free, unshackled commercial intercourse with foreign nations and a full development of her own resources which would be impossible as a component part or territory of the United States. These three divisions of the first and I believe the most numerous party all concur however, in the opinion that a *Declaration of Independence* is a necessary preliminary to the furtherance of either of their particular designs. The second and smallest party which is composed of the grantees of land and extensive land speculators are opposed to a Declaration of Independence and to all the views of the other party. They desire a reestablishment of the Constitution of Mexico of 1824 and assert their intention to adhere to the Mexican Confederacy under that form of government which recognizes the sovereignty of Texas as a member of the Republic and gives her a local Legislature and they contend a code of municipal law suited to the education, habits and pursuits of the people. But this party seems to be actuated by a different motive than that which they profess. Their extensive speculations in lands have acquired them an influence in the Mexican councils which it is said, they have exerted to their own aggrandizement and to the detriment of the interests of the settlers. Their influence with the prominent Mexicans enables them to govern the Colony as they desire. It is also said that they have acquired fraudulent titles to land which can not withstand the investigation which the Government of Texas will institute when established and these are the reasons which induce them to advocate so warmly the restoration of the Constitution of 1824 and to oppose so violently a Declaration of Independence.

I may be mistaken in the above views of the state of parties here. My residence in the Country has been brief and I have seen but few of the leading men and therefore would not have you to look upon them as infallible.

We have just heard that the General Council have deposed the Governor and delegated to the Lieutenant Governor authority to act in that capacity. The particulars have not reached us. We

have been aware for several days, of the existence of dissention between the Executive and the Legislature but have yet received no accurate intelligence of the cause. The General Council I believe have assumed the control of affairs denying the Governor's authority to act while the Governor contends that the Council has become a nullity by his decree of dissolution and consequently incompetent to discharge the functions of a Legislature, and thus we are left at this critical juncture in uncertainty and doubt as to the existence as to any legal and responsible authority or acknowledged source of power.

I beg you will excuse this hasty and imperfect sketch of the condition of parties in Texas. I write amid the noise and confusion of a camp sitting on the ground and holding the paper on my knee.

Give my love to mother, to Norborne, to Mary Ann, to Hannah, and to Henrietta and to Richard and his family. Tell them to write to me and direct to Quintana, Mouth of the Brazos, Texas, to the care of Messrs. McKinney and Williams.

Affectionately,

JOHN SOWERS BROOKS.

P. S. Tell mother I still possess the Bible she gave me when I left home and that I read it some times. My time is employed day and night in the organization and drilling of the troops. There is but one other professional soldier in the Battallion, besides myself, Sergeant Major Chadwick, from West Point. I have become habituated to sleeping on the ground with one blanket and feel no inconvenience from it.

BROOKS.

I have no room for all the intelligence I am desirous of communicating. If I have another opportunity of writing, I will tell you some thing of the agricultural conditions of the Country.

BROOKS.

My health is better than it has been of late. I weigh more now than I have at any former period of my life and I have frequently got up in the morning perfectly drenched in rain and leaving my full print in the mud where I had reposed.

BROOKS.

If we accomplish the capture of Metamoras, as I believe we shall, our next object will be the City of Tampico where there is said to be a considerable party in our favor. You have heard of the attack upon that place by Gen. Mexia and the result. All the Americans who were taken were shot. I have not had a letter from home since I landed in Texas. If you write and neglect to pay the postage to New Orleans, they will never go any further. If we succeed in taking Metamoras as I believe we shall, and I survive the attack, I will write immediately and give you the particulars. If I fall, of course, ———.

(Mailed Velasco, Texas, Jan. 20th, 1836. Post Marked New Orleans, Feb. 8th, 1836.)

*Letter to Miss Mary Ann Brooks.*

Fort Defiance, Goliad, Texas, Feb. 25th, 1836.

My dear Sister:—From the hurry of a preparation to march, I have stolen a moment to write to you. An express from San Antonio de Bexar received here a few moments since, with intelligence that the Mexican Army under Santa Ana, were in sight of that place and preparing to attack it. He heard the firing of cannon after he had gained some distance towards us. He estimated their strength at from three to five thousand men. Bexar has a garrison of 156. They have retired to the Alamo, determined to hold out to the last and have solicited reinforcements from us. We have 420 men here, and have been engaged in repairing the Fort, and mounting artillery. Commanding Officer, in the field, Gen. Fannin, has made Goliad his Head Quarters, from the conviction of its importance, as being advantageously located for a depot of reinforcements, clothing, provisions and military stores. It commands the sea coast particularly, Aransas and Matagorda Bays,—and consequently the only convenient landings for vessels of any tonnage. The only troops in the field at this time are volunteers from the United States, and they probably do not exceed 800, and perhaps but one third of them are near the scene of action. He was therefore compelled to remain in this place in order to prepare it as a depot, and to forward provisions, et cetera. From the want of cavalry, we have been unable to obtain any ac-

curate information of the enemy's movements. Thus Bexar has been left exposed and the Mexicans availing themselves of the advantages thus unavoidably offered them, have marched against it with all their force. With a forlorn hope of 320 men, we will start tonight or tomorrow morning at the dawn of day in order to relieve the gallant little garrison, who have so nobly resolved to sustain themselves until our arrival. Our force is small compared with that of the enemy. It is a desperate resort, but we hope the God of Battles will be with us—that victory will again perch on the bright little banner of Texian liberty and that the civic militia, now aroused to a sense of their danger and the proximity of their implacable and mercenary foe, will appear in their strength, that the young lion will arise in the majesty of his untried strength and our youthful Republic make herself worthy of the high destiny at which she aims. If by forced marches we can reach Bexar, a distance of more than a hundred miles, and cut our way through the enemy's lines to our friends in the Fort, our united force thus advantageously posted, may perhaps be sufficient to hold out until the militia can be collected to reinforce us. If the militia do not rendezvous promptly, I apprehend much. But the sin be upon their own heads. We have resolved to do our duty and to perish under the walls of the Alamo, if stern necessity requires it. We are but poorly prepared to meet the formidable host of Mexicans, arrayed against us.

I am now acting aid-de-camp to the Commander in chief, having resigned my appointment of the Adjutancy to the 1st Regiment. I have also been acting as chief engineer to the post and but for this occurrence, would have had it in a tolerable state of defense in a short time. The ordnance and Magazine were also placed under my charge. From this circumstance, you will readily and rationally infer, that there are but few professional soldiers here, when one of my age with but few months experience has so many important trusts confided to him. My duties have been arduous in the extreme, having besides the above appointments, frequently to drill the Regiment and companies, and this must be my excuse for not having written home as often as I might have done otherwise. By the way, I have not heard from home either

by letter or otherwise since I left New York. Why have you not written?

And now my dear sister, I would ask you to look upon my situation in its proper light, and to indulge in no unnecessary fears. I am a soldier both morally and physically. Death is one of the chances of the game I play and if it falls to my lot, I shall not murmur, and you should not regret. I shall write to you as soon as some thing decisive occurs. We shall probably be attacked by the Mexicans on our way to Bexar, and if I should die, my services will entitle me to 1800 or more acres of land which will be valuable. It will revert to my representatives, and father should claim it. Tell him I owe Mr. Hagerty in N. Y. and a portion of it can be applied to the discharge of that debt.

We will take with us, four pieces of artillery, two sixes and two fours.—Now is the time for the people of the U. S. to do something for Texas. Can nothing be done in Staunton?

Give my love to all the family, tell mother to remember me, and tell them all to write to me. They are calling for me now. In the greatest haste, Ever your brother,

JOHN SOWERS BROOKS.

(No post mark.)

*Letter to A. H. Brooks.*

Fort Defiance, Goliad, Texas, Feb. 25th, 1836, 10 P. M.

My dear Father:—

I wrote to Mary Ann today, and as the Express does not leave before reveille tomorrow, I thought that I might profitably employ the few moments I have obtained in writing to you, for it is possible I may never have another opportunity.

In my letter, I gave a hasty detail of our intended movements and the causes which produced them and I would refer you to it, if it has reached its destination.

From information received since the letter above referred to, was written, we are induced to believe that the Mexican force at and near San Antonio de Bexar does not exceed 3000. The Garrison which has been withdrawn from the town to the Alamo, a Fort in the suburbs, consists in 156 effective men. They are resolute

and have determined to die in the ditch rather than dishonor themselves, the cause they have espoused, or the Country they represent.

We will march at the dawn of day tomorrow with 320 men, and 4 pieces of artillery,—2 sixes and 2 fours. We have no provisions scarcely, and many of us are naked and entirely destitute of shoes. But something must be done to relieve our Country. We have suffered much and may reasonably anticipate much greater suffering. But if we succeed in reaching Bexar, before the Garrison is compelled to surrender and are successful in taking the place and its gallant defenders, we shall deem ourselves amply repaid for our trials and hardships. But if we fail, I fear that our misfortunes will have an unhappy influence in prolonging the struggle in which poor Texas is engaged. We will leave a Garrison of 100 men with the hope that a portion of the Civic Militia who are embodying will be ordered here, and the remainder sent to reinforce us. If we are successful, it will prove a check to the Mexican army from which it will not readily recover and which will ever after have a salutary influence upon our cause. But my dear Father, I frankly confess that without the interposition of Providence, we can not rationally anticipate any other result to our Quixotic expedition than total defeat. If the Militia assemble, and move promptly to our aid, we may be saved. We have less than 350 men; the force of the enemy is possibly 3000—a vast disparity. We are almost naked and without provisions and very little ammunition. We are undisciplined in a great measure; they are regulars, the elite of Santa Ana's army; well fed, well clothed, and well appointed and accompanied by a formidable battery of heavy field and battering pieces. We have a few pieces but no experienced artillerists and but a few rounds of fixed ammunition, and perhaps less of loose powder and balls. We can not therefore, calculate very sanguinely upon victory. However, we will do our best, and if we perish, Texas and our friends will remember that we have done our duty.

In my letter to sister, I alluded to the possibility of my death, not with a view to elicit hers or your sympathy, or to excite any unpleasant feelings in my behalf. I owe Mr. Hagarty a small sum he furnished me and am desirous of pointing out some mode by

which it may be repaid, if I should be unfortunate enough to fall. My services here will entitle me to 1800 or more acres of land. It will revert to my legal representatives, and I hope you will claim it and appropriate a sufficient portion of it to that purpose.

From our information, we are induced to apprehend an attack on our march to Bexar, by a detachment of the enemy's cavalry. We hope they will not be in sufficient force to retard our march, much less defeat us.

I am at present acting Aid de Camp to the Commander-in-Chief and Chief Engineer of the post and master of ordnance.

It is getting late, I slept but little last night and as we must march soon in the morning, I beg you will excuse this hasty scrawl.

Give my love to mother, Norborne, Mary Ann, Hannah, Henrietta and to Richard and his family. My health is good. Farewell!

Your affectionate son,

JOHN SOWERS BROOKS.

P. S. I have not heard from home since I left. Direct your letters to the care of J. W. Fannin, Jr., Army of Texas, pay the postage to New Orleans. I have no money. I should like to have

BROOKS.

Do not fail to write me immediately, and send me some money if possible. I am very much in want of it, I assure you. The Government has obtained a loan and will soon pay us off—when I can pay you.

BROOKS.

Give my respects to all who remember me. Tell the youth of Staunton they may now do some thing in the cause of Liberty if they will come to Texas.

(No post mark.)

Fort Defiance in Goliad, Head Quarters,  
Army of Texas, March 2, 1836.

My dear Mother:—

In my letters to Father and Sister a few days since, I apprized you of some of the events transpiring on the western frontier of Texas, and of our contemplated movements. Since the date of those letters, circumstances have occurred which have materially

changed our system of operations for the present. I informed you that the advance of the Mexican Army consisting of 2000 men had attacked Bexar or Baiar. the town which was surrendered by Gen. Cos, to the Americans, and that we were preparing to march to its relief—it being garrisoned by 156 men, among whom is “Davy Crockett.” We marched at the time appointed, with 420 men, nearly the whole force at Goliad, leaving only one Company of Regulars to guard the Fort. Our baggage wagons and artillery were all drawn by oxen (no broken horses could be obtained) and there were but a few yokes of them. In attempting to cross the San Antonio River, three of our wagons broke down and it was with the utmost labor and personal hazzard, that our four pieces of cannon were conveyed safely across. We remained there during the day, with our ammunition wagon on the opposite side of the River. During the night, some of the oxen strayed off and could not be found the next morning. Our situation became delicate and embarrassing in the extreme. If we proceeded we must incur the risk of starvation, and leave our luggage and artillery behind. The Country between us and Bexar is entirely unsettled, and there would be but little hope of obtaining provisions on the route and we would be able only to carry 12 rounds of cartridges each. Every one felt an anxiety to relieve our friends, who we had been informed, had retired to the Alamo, a fortress in Bexar, resolved to hold out, until our arrival. Yet every one saw the impropriety, if not the impossibility of our proceeding under existing circumstances and it was equally apparent to all that our evacuation of Goliad, would leave the whole frontier from Bexar to the coast open to the incursions of the enemy, who were then concentrating at Laredo and the provisions, clothing, military stores, et cetera, at Dimmitts Landing and Matagorda, perhaps all that were in Texas, would eventually be lost. Intelligence also reached us that the advance of Santa Anas lower division had surprised San Patricio about 50 miles in front of our position and put the whole garrison under the command of Col. Johnson to the sword. Five of them have reached this place. Col. Johnson is one of them, and they are probably all that have escaped. Capt. Pearson of the Volunteers, was killed with several others, after they had surrendered. The war is to be one of extermination. Each party seems



to understand that no quarters are to be given or asked. We held a Council of War in the bushes on the bank of the River; and after a calm review of all these circumstances, it was concluded to return to Goliad, and place the Fort in a defensible condition. We are hard at work, day and night, picketing, ditching, and mounting cannon, &c. We are hourly in expectation of an attack. On the morning of the 29th ult. our pickets were driven in by a number of men supposed to be a reconnoitering party of the enemy. The Garrison was called to arms and dispositions made for defense. A party of 50 men were sent out to make discoveries and the rest remained under arms till day light. Nothing satisfactory was ascertained. There are about 450 men here. The Mexican force approaching us is variously estimated at from 1500 to 3000 men. We will endeavor to make as good a stand as possible and if we are taken, it will be after a hard fight for we know that we can not expect quarters and therefore do not intend to give or ask any, result as it may.

If the division of the Mexican army advancing against this place has met any obstructions, and it is probable they have been attacked by the Comanche Indians, and their advance much retarded by the loss of their horses and baggage, 200 men will be detached for the relief of Bexar. I will go with them. Our object will be to cut our way through the Mexican army into the Alamo, and carry with us such provisions as it will be possible to take on a forced march. Our united force will probably be sufficient to hold out until we are relieved by a large force from the Colonies.

We have just received additional intelligence from Bexar. The Mexicans have made two successive attacks on the Alamo in both of which the gallant little garrison repulsed them with some loss. Probably Davy Crockett "grinned" them off.

We will probably march tomorrow or the next day, if we can procure fresh oxen enough to transport our baggage and two six pounders. The people in the settlements are all arming themselves. The sound of clashing steel is heard on their borders and it is time they should awake now if they wish to preserve their freedom and the fruits of so many years of toil and privation. Now is the time for volunteers from the United States. Let them

come with six months clothing and one hundred rounds of ammunition, and they may be of essential service to the cause of Liberty, and no doubt will be amply rewarded by the people of Texas. Now or never.

Write to me soon. I have not heard from home for four months. Direct your letters to John Sowers Brooks, Volunteer Army of Texas, to the care of J. W. Fannin, Jr., Col. and Comt. Artillery, or to Quintana, Mouth of the Brazos, to the care of Messrs McKinney and Williams and they will forward them to me. Tell Mary Ann, Father, and all of you to write, and perhaps some of the letters will reach me. Give my love to all the family. Tell Richard to write to me.

Your affectionate son,

JOHN SOWERS BROOKS.

P. S. We are all nearly naked—and there are but few of us who have a pair of shoes. We have nothing but fresh beef without salt—no bread for several days.

BROOKS.

On my arrival here, I was appointed Adjutant of the Post. The Col. desired to have me in his family—I therefore resigned the Adjutancy and was appointed as Aid-de-Camp.

A spy was taken last night, who will probably be shot tomorrow. One of our men is under arrest for sleeping on post. He will be tried by a Court Martial—the penalty is death.

I have had no money for some time and I am now nearly naked and starved—Fresh beef, without salt, is all we get.

(Mailed Fort Defiance Goliad, March 2nd, 1836. Post-marked. New Orleans. Date blurred.)

*Letter to Miss Mary Ann Brooks.*

Fort Defiance Goliad, Texas.

March 4, 1836.

My dear Sister:—

Another opportunity of writing to you occurs, and I embrace it because they are infrequent, and becoming hourly more so. The precarious channel, through which all letters must arrive at, or go from this place, affords, indeed, the only satisfactory explanation of your mysterious silence; and the belief that yours have been intercepted or miscarried, is consoling indeed, for it renders doubt-

ful what, in my moments of desperation, I have often—feared is certain—that you had forgotten your poor, wayward brother. Why is it so? Why have you not written? War, it is true, “opens a vein that bleeds Nations to death;” but why should it invade the sanctity of social connection? Why should it dissolve fraternal bonds or sunder domestic ties? Is it necessary that we should be morally, as well as physically separated? That the associations of infancy, the remembrances of child hood, the anticipations of youth, and the common pleasures, hopes, and fears of better and happier days, should be forgotten, and we pursue our weary and desolate track through life, as if neither had existed? Is it necessary because we are separated, because the billows of the Atlantic, or the Pillars of the Alleghany are between us, that all the ties which bound us, in other days should be severed? I trust not. Why then do you not avail yourself of that medium of communion, which language proffers? Have I rendered myself unworthy of your affection? I know my course, since I left home, has been erratic in the extreme. But can you conceive of no reason why it has been so? If you can recall the events of the last few years, you must; if you can not, you may then perhaps, with justice, censure me for that reckless indifference, to my hopes and prospects in life, with which, I have so often been charged. It is true that I have passed unimproved many opportunities of acquiring the good opinion of my fellow men, but why was it so? Because early misfortunes have broken and seared a heart, perhaps too sensitive, and blighted all the hopes which a disposition too sanguine, has prompted me to form and cherish. Can I change the fiat of fate? *Can I control the waves of mighty destiny?*

My life has indeed, been a wayward and useless one; and you can not be more sensible of it, or more sincerely deplore it, than myself. But, notwithstanding all my faults and follies, I have never failed in respect for the soil of birth, regard for my native village, love for my home, or affection for my relatives. I have never forgotten: and many an hour of my loneliness has been consumed by thoughts of them. Often has the recollection of the past and of you, arrested me on the brink of acts of deeper recklessness, and of more irremediable desperation so far as this world is concerned, than any I had hitherto committed, Still a latent hope

that I may see you all again, and be once more happy, swells my throbbing bosom. But there is some thing, *I know not what*, which whispers me, that the hope is destined to no realization on earth.

I am acting, my dear sister, in that sphere which nature designed me to fill. *I am a soldier of fortune*; and all the premonitions of my child hood early told me that I should be one. My profession, perhaps for life, be it short or long, will be that of *arms*. It is the only pursuit in which I could feel a throb of interest; and the cause in which I now exercise it, renders it still dearer, and more ennobling to me. It is the course of Liberty, of the oppressed against the Tyrant, of the free man against the bigoted slave, and, what recommends it more strongly to me, of the weak against the strong. If I fall, let me fall— It is one of the chances of the game I play—a casualty to which every soldier is liable. My prayer has been, since my earliest recollection, to die on the field of battle, with the shout of victory in my ears; and, if it is the will of high Heaven, that that fate should meet me now, I will not murmur and you should not. Remember that your religion teaches that death is but a change of scene.

But all this is of no avail. Perhaps a brief retrospect of the events of our campaign, up to this period, would be interesting to you. On the 24th day of January 1836, the Georgia Battalion of Volunteers, (of which I was Adjutant), consisting of four Companies, sailed from Velasco, at the Mouth of the Brazos, in two vessels. Our object was primarily, to attack and take Matamoras, and thus form a point of rendezvous, and concentration for volunteers from the U. States, for a more extensive invasion of Mexico. Our intention was to allow Liberal principles, and support for the time, the federation of 1824, and thus revolutionize Tamaulipas, the greater portion of whose citizens are opposed to Santa Ana, and to secure our foot hold in Mexico. The fourth day, we debarked at Copano, and after a days march, we pitched our tents at the Mission of Refugio, and waited for the promised munitions and reinforcements. They never arrived. In the mean time, our spy, who had preceded us, returned with the intelligence, that the people of Tamaulipas were opposed to any severance of the Republican bonds, and would not favor our project, if Texas declared itself independent. He also informed us, that Santa Ana was

concentrating his troops, to the number, of from 7 to 12,000 men, at Matamoras, Laredo, Saltillo, Monclova, and Monterey, for the purpose of invading Texas, and punishing his rebellious subjects, with a war of extermination. We retreated to Goliad, and commenced fortifying and preparing for the threatened storm. We have remained here ever since, busily employed, in getting in provisions, military stores, picketing, ditching, and mounting cannon, for our defence.

Santa Ana's army is now in motion, and our almost unprotected frontier, is the destined goal of its operations. One of his divisions has already attacked Bexar, the town which was surrendered to the Americans, on the 18th Dec. 1835, by the Mexican General, Cos,<sup>1</sup> which garrison consisted of only 156 Volunteers, who retreated to the Alamo, a strong fortress in the suburbs, and still held out, at our last intelligence. "Davy Crockett" is with them. The Mexicans amounted to 2000. We started with 300<sup>2</sup> men to their relief, but found it impossible to proceed, from the want of horses or oxen, to transport our baggage and artillery. While deliberating on what steps to take, intelligence reached us that 200 Mexicans, the advance guard of the division of their army, which was destined to operate against this portion of our frontier, had attacked and totally defeated, Col. Johnson and his force of 40 men at San Patricio, a town on the Rio de la Neuces, about 60 miles in front of our position. Only five escaped, among whom was Col. Johnson and Mr. Toler, a merchant. We are in hourly expectation of an attack; but, from the want of horses, we are unable to obtain any accurate information of the strength or movements of the enemy. We suppose their force to be from 1500 to 3000 men. We have but 500—all Volunteers. But we are resolved to die, to a man, under the walls we have thrown up, rather than surrender to a horde of merciless savages, who have declared their determination to adhere to none of the rules of civilized war fare; but to murder all Americans, indiscriminately. Capt. Pearson and several others were shot down, after they had surrendered at San Patricio. This on the part of the enemy, is to be a war of extermination, not directed solely against the armed sol-

<sup>1</sup>Cos surrendered San Antonio on December 10.—E. C. B.

<sup>2</sup>See above, pages 179, 181, 183, and below, 191.

diers in the field, but against the peaceful citizen, the helpless female, and the defenceless infant. They show no quarter; we do not require it; and, indeed, both parties seem to have tacitly contracted, that it shall neither be asked nor given. Let them pursue their course of ruthless cruelty; they will encounter spirits as stern as their own; they will find, if retaliation requires it, that we can be as deaf to the calls of mercy as they can be. If victory favors us, ample shall be their retribution, for the murdered volunteers at San Patricio.

We have just learned that Col. Grant with 22 men, has been attacked by 200 Mexicans, on the road from San Patricio to Matamoros, 15 miles from the former place, and his whole party, with the exception of two who escaped, killed or taken. Col. Grant is a prisoner. Up to this time, they have uniformly killed all the Americans they take, and it is reasonable therefore, to infer that not one of that ill fated party survived.

We will probably be attacked before I can write you again. The advance of the enemy is within 25 miles of us. If we are defeated, it will be after a hard fight. Tell every one of the family to write to me, and mail their letters different days.

Events are thickening upon us. I will write to you again, the first opportunity that occurs. In the mean time write to me by several different mails; and if I die, reflect that it will be in a good cause.

Give my love to all the family.

Your affectionate brother,

JOHN SOWERS BROOKS.

Direct your letters to John Sowers Brooks, Volunteer Army of Texas, to the care of Col. J. W. Fannin, Jr., or to Quintana, Mouth of the Brazos, to the care of Messrs. McKinney & Williams. It has been four months since I have heard from home.

On my arrival at Goliad, I was appointed Adjutant of the Post. I have since been transferred to the General's Staff, as Aid-de-Camp.

I am nearly naked, almost barefooted, and without a cent of money. We have had nothing but beef for several days. We suffer much and labor hard in repairing the Fort.

(Endorsed on the back, "Will Mess. McKinney & Williams,

please forward this letter to U. S. by first opportunity and oblige,  
J. S. B."

Post Marked, New Orleans, Mar. 23. Endorsed, Fort Defiance,  
Mar. 4, 1836.)

*Letter to Mr. James Hagarty, New York, U. S.*

Fort Defiance, Goliad Texas, March 9, 1836.

My dear friend:—

I have written to you several times since my arrival in Texas; but, as I have received no answer from you, I presume my letters have miscarried. An opportunity now occurs of forwarding to Matagorda, whence it will more probably be shipped to New Orleans, than by the usual route, now infested by the enemy.

A brief retrospect of our heretofore bloodless campaign, will perhaps, be interesting to you. I write in great haste, and may possibly, omit events necessary to elucidate our conduct. Indeed, it is impossible within the compass of a single letter, to give you any idea of the manner in which our little army has been influenced by the policies of the Country; though most of them are strangers to it, and consequently unable to realize the motives, which actuate the different parties.— For Texas is not, as you would probably suppose, united, in the great struggle before her. Party spirit has taken a form even more malignant than she has assumed in the U. States; and to such an extent has domestic cavilling been carried, that the Council have deposed, impeached, and arrested the Governor, while he, by an official fiat, has dissolved the Council; and thus we see the striking anomaly of two Governors, created by different authorities, ruling in the same country.

But, to return— On the 24th day of January 1836, the Georgia Battallion of Volunteers, in which I held a responsible office, sailed from the Brazos, under the Command of J. W. Fannin, Jr. The object of this expedition was to take the City of Matamoros, to revolutionize the State of Tamaulipas, to form a nucleus, or point of rendezvous for volunteers from the U. States, to harrass the enemy at sea, to relieve ourselves from the burden of the war by carrying it out of the Country, and to give employment to the volunteers who had lately arrived. On the 4th day we arrived

Copano, at the head of the Aransas Bay, where we debarked, and landed our stores, munitions, and artillery. After a days march, we pitched our tents at the Mission of Refugio, in Mr. Power's grant, and remained for a few days, in order to make cartridges and prepare our artillery, which was defective, for service. In the mean time, the scout who had been sent ahead, returned with information, that Santa Ana had already commenced the concentration of his army on our frontiers. They were rendezvousing at Matamoras, Monclova, Saltillo, Monterey, and Laredo, to the number of from 6 to 10000 men, and designed attacking Bexar and Goliad simultaneously, with two divisions of his army, and marching the third between those points to San Felipe, where he intended fortifying. We immediately apprised Government of these facts, and fell back to Goliad with our small force of 450 men, and commenced repairing the Fort. Bexar was garrisoned by 150 or 200 men; and with this handful of 6 or 700 Volunteers, we are left by the generous Texians to roll back the tide of invasion from their soil.

On the 23rd ult. the Mexican advance, reached Bexar, and attacked the subsequent morning with 1800 men. The gallant little garrison retired to the Alamo, a fortress in the suburbs, resolved to hold out to the last. The Mexicans made several assaults, and were repulsed with loss at every instance. On the receipt of the intelligence at Goliad, we promptly marched with 320<sup>1</sup> men and four pieces of artillery, to their aid. In marching a few miles, our oxen became weary, and we were compelled to halt or leave our baggage and artillery. While consulting on what course to pursue, we received news of the successive defeats of the parties of Cols. Johnson and Grant, in Tamaulipas., and of the approach of the lower division of Santa Ana's army on our position at Goliad. A Council of War was held in the bushes, and it was determined to return to the post we had vacated in the morning, as its abandonment would leave the road open to the settlements, and completely uncover our depot of provisions, the only one now in Texas, and consequently the main stay of the Army.<sup>2</sup>

The Mexicans, to the number of 700, are now in San Patricio,

<sup>1</sup>See above, pages 179, 181, 183.

<sup>2</sup>See above, page 183.



about 60 miles in front of our position; and another party of 200 have been discovered within 18 miles of us, between us and Gonzales. Every thing indicates that an attack will be speedily made upon us. Their scouts, well mounted, frequently push up to our walls, and, from the want of horses, we are unable to punish them.

We have again heard from Bexar, Santa Ana has arrived there himself, with 3000 men, making his whole force 4800. He has erected a battery within 400 yards of the Alamo, and every shot goes through it, as the walls are weak. It is feared that Bexar will be taken and that the devoted courage of the brave defenders will be of no avail.

We have had no bread, for several days. I am nearly naked, without shoes, and without money. We suffer much, and as soon as Bexar falls, we will be surrounded by 6000 infernal Mexicans. But we are resolved to die under the walls rather than surrender.

You shall hear from me again as soon as possible.

I am acting Aid-de-Camp to the Commander-in-Chief, with the rank of Lieutenant. The Express is anxious to start, and I am compelled to close this letter, unfinished.

Independence has probably been declared. We are in a critical situation. I will die like a soldier.

Farewell,

JOHN S. BROOKS.

(Endorsed, "Mes. McKinney & Williams will please forward this to the U. S. by the first opportunity and oblige, J. S. B." Also "Goliad, Mar. 9, '36. Post Marked New Orleans, Mar. 28.)

*Letter to A. H. Brooks.*

Fort Defiance, Goliad, Texas,

March 10, 1836.

My dear Father:—

I wrote to Mother and to Mary Ann a few days since; but, as the route over which the Government's courier, who carried the letters, must have passed has been infested by advanced parties of the enemy, it is possible they have been intercepted; and, as an officer will be sent to Matagorda to morrow, I have concluded to write again.

In the letters referred to, and some others I have previously written, I gave a brief detail of the events of our campaign up to this period. As some of these epistles, must have reached their destination, I will not again trouble you with a narration of incidents, which I presume, are familiar to you.

A party of 70 men, under the joint command of Col's. Grant and Johnson, have been in Tamaulipas, for the purpose of acquiring information, as to the designs of the enemy, ever since the fall of Bexar in December last. They had taken from 2 to 300 horses, for the use of the army; and were gradually retiring on this post, when half the party, with Col. Johnson at its head, was attacked by about 200 of the enemy, and totally defeated. Six, among whom was their leader, escaped. Capt. Pearson, and two others were inhumanly butchered, after they had surrendered. They, of course, lost all their horses and arms. The party under Col. Grant, were attacked between 8 and 9 o'clock in the morning. They were bringing on a large herd of horses, and in their attempt to save them, and, at the same time, fight the enemy, who amounted to 150, they were cut to pieces. Five only escaped. Col. Grant was either killed on the ground, or is now a prisoner. Scarcely had the intelligence of these disasters to our advance in Tamaulipas reached us, when we were informed by express, that the Mexicans had entered Bexar with an effective force of 1800 men. The garrison there consisted of 156 Americans, who retreated, on the approach of the enemy to the Alamo, a Spanish fortress in the neighborhood, which was immediately invested, and has been vigorously besieged up to the date of our latest intelligence.

Immediately on receipt of the news, we promptly took up the line of march, in order to relieve them. After proceeding three miles, several of our baggage wagons broke down; and it was found impossible, to get the ammunition carts or artillery over the river San Antonio. We accordingly halted. During the night our oxen strayed off. In the morning a Council of War was convened. While it was in session, a courier apprised us, that 650 of the enemy, the same, probably, who had defeated Grant and Johnson, had reached San Patricio on the Neuces and would attack our depot of provisions on the La Baca, and at Matagorda.

With these facts before us, it was concluded to return to Goliad, and maintain that place, which was done.

Thirty two men have cut their way into the Alamo, with some provisions. The enemy have erected a battery of nine pounders within 400 yards of the Fort, and every shot goes through the walls. A large party of the enemy are between this and Bexar, with a design of cutting off reinforcements. Another division of 3000 Mexicans have arrived at Bexar, making their whole force now there 4800 men. The little garrison still holds out against this formidable force. It is said that Santa Ana is himself with the army before the Alamo.

It is said that Santa Ana designs driving all the Americans beyond Sabine. We have just been advised that he intends detaching 1000 men from Bexar, to form a junction with the 650 at San Patricio, and then reduce this place. We have 450 men here, and twelve pieces of small artillery. We have strengthened the fort very much; and he will find it difficult with his 1650 men to drive us from our post.

We are hourly anticipating an attack, and preparing for it. We are short of provisions, and that is now our deadliest foe. Unless we are soon supplied, we can not hold out much longer. We have had no bread for some time. We suffer much from the want of shoes and clothing.

Excuse this hasty letter. I have just returned from a weary and unsuccessful march in pursuit of a party of Mexicans, who appeared a few miles from this place.

I have not heard from home since I have been in Texas, and I am at a loss to account for your silence.

The Convention, which met the first of this month, it is rumored, have declared Texas independent. No official or authentic information, however, has come to hand.

You shall hear from me again as soon as possible. I am Aid-de-Camp to the Commandant here. Farewell.

Your affectionate son,

JOHN S. BROOKS.

P. S. I have neither clothes nor money to buy them. The Gov-

ernment furnishes us with nothing,—not even amunition. I have written nearly twenty letters home, all of them unanswered.

BROOKS.

Give my love to all the family and write.

(Endorsed "March 10th, 1836, Fort Defiance, Goliad." Post Marked, "New Orleans, April 19.)

5.

New Orleans, 4th June, 1836.

Mr. N. C. Brooks:—

Sir., Your letter of the 13th ult. came to hand this morning; I showed it to General Houston, who is now at my house, confined by a very severe wound, and I very much regret to be compelled in candor to inform you that he has no doubt of the fact of your brother's having fallen. The Brooks, who made an application before me, cannot be your brother, his name is different, and he is quite an illiterate man. With the hope that you will excuse the laconic style of a business man, who has to answer some half-dozen letters similar to yours every day.

I am respectfully

Your mo ob Sr

WM. CHRISTY.

(Post Marked New Orleans, June 5, '36.)

6.

Natchitoches, 26th June, 1836.

To A. H. Brooks, Esq.,

Dear Sir:—I have the pleasure to acknowledge the receipt of your esteemed letter of the 30th ult. which did not reach me until last night.—In answer to your inquiries respecting the fate of your brave and gallant son, John S. Brooks, I can give you no certain information. Major Cook informs me that he saw your son in La Bahia on the 19th of February last. He was then adjutant of the Regiment under Col. Fannin, and continued in that station until the surrender of Col. F. I have no doubt but that he was amongst our unfortunate countrymen who perished at La

Bahia—If any information reaches me concerning him or if his papers should be received, they shall be forwarded to you without delay.—

Your obt. Servant,

SAM. HOUSTON.

(Post-Marked New Orleans, June 30.)

7.

Courtako, Ala., 5th Aug., 1836.

Mr. N. C. Brooks, Staunton, Va.

Dear Sir:—I have just received your letter, and hasten to give you the information you desire, in relation to the fate of your gallant though unfortunate brother. I knew him well, and as we were both natives of the same state, we soon became well acquainted, and our intercourse was of the most friendly character. Indeed, commanding "The Red Rovers" my-self, placed me in a situation to be with him almost daily.

He was in the battle of the Prairie on the 19th March, fought with a musket, in the most cool and chivalrous manner, and received a very severe wound in the centre of the left thigh which shattered the bone and caused great pain. He was taken back to Goliad and lodged in the same house with some wounded Mexican Officers,— This was done at Col. Fannin's instance who thought he would be better attended to, and who seemed to take a deep interest in his situation. He was daily attended by a young Surgeon (Dr. Field) and I visited him likewise. I saw him for the last time, late on Saturday evening previous to the massacre. Dr. Field was with him that night and has since informed me, that he was at his bed-side on the following morning, when he was taken out by a file of soldiers, who murdered him within a short distance of the house. I have thus been particular in my details, in order to remove everything like doubt or suspense on this painful subject. I sincerely condole with his friends in their bereavement and if anything can mitigate their grief, it can be found in the estimate which was placed upon the young man by all who knew him.

John Sowers Brooks, was alike conspicuous for his private virtues and noble daring in battle.

Respectfully yrs.

JACK SHACKLEFORD.

(Post-Marked Courto. A. Aug. 5.)

8.

Charlemont, September 2, 1836.

Dear Sir:—Yours of the 27th August, was received this morning and though a review of those horrid scenes is painful to me, yet it always gives me pleasure to be able, though in a small way, to administer the balm of consolation to the bereaved friends of those who have fallen by more than savage cruelty. And the interest which I had taken in your brother, renders this task peculiarly unpleasant. I was introduced to your brother John Sowers Brooks, at Goliad, about two weeks before the fatal battle of Colette in which his thigh bone was broken by a ball. Your brother's pleasant and affable manners soon brought about an intimate acquaintance between us. He bore himself at all times in a manner worthy of his rank and promise. He was a favorite with all who knew him, especially Col. F. and Mr. Chadwick. His suffering was much more severe than is common in such cases in consequence of spasms in the muscles of the wounded thigh, which made him often pray for death, which he asked at my hand, as his only remaining friend to whom he could appeal. He gave me many small mementoes, which I designed to send to his friend, but I was unable to keep them.

I rendered him every comfort in my power, but how little that was, you, I presume, can imagine. He had no warning of his death until the blow came that set his spirit free.

When he gave the last shriek, a Mexican officer who was also wounded turned to me and said, "Your friend is dead." He then ordered me to carry your brothers trunk to him, and opening it, he appeared to derive much satisfaction from the prospect of so many good clothes.<sup>1</sup> Among the papers given me to read and interpret was a letter from Gen. Austin, in reply to one from your

<sup>1</sup>See above, pages 171, 185, 192.

brother proposing to assist the Texans, in their struggle for the defence of their homes, and constitutional liberty, and likewise a captain's commission from the Texian government. Your description is in exact agreement with the person whom I call your brother.

The names of the Mexican officers I do not remember.

A minute account of that engagement together with many others fought in Texas, with an account of the causes of the war &c., I have given the public in pamphlet form. I, a few days since, forwarded a paper containing the account of my suffering on that occasion, to Mrs. Mary Brooks of Staunton, the only one of his, your brother's relatives, whose name I remember.

With much esteem and commiseration,

I subscribe myself, &c.,

JOS. E. FIELD.

(Postmarked "Charlemont" Sept. 6th, 1836.

To Mr. Norborne C. Brooks.)

New York, October 7th, 1836.

Dear Sir:—Yours of Sept. 1st was duly received, but from a hope that I should be able so to arrange my affairs as to enable me to return through Staunton, I have delayed an answer until the last moment of hope.

Nothing could afford me greater satisfaction than an interview with the friends and relatives of one of whose acquaintance I have so much cause to be proud. It would also remove the embarrassment I now feel in anticipating the enquiries you would make concerning him.

My acquaintance with your son was short but interesting to me and the good feeling he always manifested, will make his memory ever dear to me.

Our conversation turned generally upon the incidents of the war in which we were engaged. The probability of its favorable issue. The beauties of the country, and promising prospects which it afforded to the young and enterprising.

I know that he kept a journal, but what became of it at his death, I cannot tell. I thought more of dying myself, at that time, than preserving mementoes of my friends, but I have since

regretted that I did not make an effort to save some papers which were shown me and which I think I could have preserved without danger. On my return to Texas I will make diligent inquiry for the journal, which you have reason to believe was left with Mc-Kinney and Williams.

In answer to a letter from Mr. Norborne C. Brooks, I gave a short account of some papers that were found in your son's trunk. Except those, I do not remember to have seen any after his death.

The first opportunity for a display of military prowess which was presented to Col. Fannin's army after my union with it, was the expedition sent to the relief of Capt. King to the Mission Refugio under Lieut. Ward in which your son volunteered as the representative of Col. Fannin.

But some of his companions being dilatory in making preparations for their departure caused a disaster to them on their way. Their guide, being bewildered in the prairie, lost his way, and after wandering all night, the light found them near their place of starting to which they returned. Mr. Chadwick was his companion in this, as on all other occasions of a similar nature, and as I have reason to believe shared a common fate. The next occasion on which he manifested a wish to be useful, was the morning previous to our retreat. Our company of horse had got into a skirmish with the enemies' cavalry upon the other side of the San Antonio river near a dilapidated fortress in which our troops had taken shelter. Capt. Brooks, voluntarily put himself at the head of a company of infantry, and waded the river for the purpose of bringing on an engagement, but the Mexican horse retreated too soon. In the retreat he was very active and useful. During the engagement I had no opportunity of seeing him nor did I know that he was wounded until I was informed by Col. Fannin, who requested me to go to him. He made no complaint, except from thirst. One of the many comforts denied us at this time was water, the best refreshment to a wounded soldier, but after an hour or two's search I found one solitary dram in a gourd, suspended from the horn of the saddle of a wild mule, used for packing. This was the only comfort within my reach. The next morning we were separated and I saw him no more until he was brought into the fort in a cart with the other wounded. At my request he was



placed in the same room with me and I was allowed to be with him the principal part of the day and to be by his side in the night. Col. Fannin was very kind in letting him have his blanket, of which we had most of us been robbed. The Mexicans at first neglected to give him food necessary for his comfort, but by my sharing with him the small pittance allowed me, we were enabled to prolong existence against the day of bloody and vindictive revenge. With an old axe I made a long extending splint, which with the assistance of Doctor Shackleford who was very kind, I was enabled to apply so as in some degree to mitigate his sufferings.

He often inquired of me if I thought his wound would terminate fatally, and spoke of death with perfect composure. As I can no longer serve your son in this world, permit me, as a token of respect I have for his virtues, to do a small service for his relatives by selecting the land to which you are entitled by his death and services.

Anything directed to me at Matagorda, Texas, will be attended to by your unworthy friend and humble servant,

JOSEPH E. FIELD.

N. B. I do not remember any of the other gentlemen of whom you made inquiry.

To Miss Marion [Marian]:

As language is inadequate to convey to you the sentiments of gratitude I feel for the kind expressions and honor done me in your supplement to your Father's letter I can only wish that instead of apologies you had filled the letter with inquiries. Perhaps it is not too late yet. Nothing can give me more happiness. Concerning the Bible. About one hour before your brother's death a young Mexican officer came into the room and made some inquiries concerning his religious belief and if he had a Bible. Upon which, he, Capt. B., requested me to take it out of his trunk and show it to the officer. He received it and after looking over it put it in his pocket and walked away. I have reason to believe that he valued it much.

Yours in sincerity,

J. E. F.

I have been waiting here for passage to Texas in the armed schooner *Invincible*. Capt. Brown.

To Mr. A. H. Brooks, Staunton, Va.

(Post Marked New York Oct. 8th 1836.)

9.

China Grove, Texas, 20th Jan., 1837.

To Mr. A. G. Brooks,

Staunton, Va.

Dear Sir.—At the request of Dr. Field I address you these few lines in relation to your deceased son. I was acquainted with him, and as you want some little information in relation to him, I can give you a little, although you must excuse this bad writing, as I am still laboring under a severe attack of bilious fever and salivation; He was made adjutant of the Post of Goliad and acted as such until a Mr. Bristow arrived in February, when he was superseded. He was then advanced to the Staff, and in fact was, as I have heard Col Fannin say, the most useful person about the fort. He built, or at least he drafted the plan of laying a half-moon battery, which gave great satisfaction, and was a masterpiece which did him great credit. It was called Brooks's Battery, and the soldiers performed the work. Also several other things, which if Fannin had remained, would have played havoc amongst the Mexicans. Amongst them all was a frame of wood containing 100 muskets, which they call in France an Infernal Machine. He and Chadwick used to drill the whole of the men every day, Your son was loved by all, as a good officer, as a gentleman, and for his amiable disposition. He was severe, but commanded respect from all. I lived with Fannin and knew his sentiments toward your son, which were the following;—that when I started to see the Govt in relation to some Mexicans and other business of Fannin's, he recommended your son and Chadwick strongly to the Govt. I hoped that they would both be forwarded to the Regular Service instead of the Volunteer Service, and to be commissioned not less than Major, as they were military men, Your son he also stated, was an excellent Engineer. I carried these letters on to the Governor myself. I saw a letter from Mr. Brook's sister in June last. A Mr. Atwell opened it and told me to read it, He stated to me

that he was going to administer to your son's estate. I told him he had better get a power of attorney from you before taking any such step, He said that he had written on to you for that, but since then Atwell was drowned in the Guadalupe river while in the act of crossing; so I suppose nothing has been done. I will here state what your son is entitled to or near about it. From \$60 to \$100 salary, at that time soldiers not officers were only allowed \$20 per month. Also he is entitled to about sixteen to seventeen hundred acres of land, which you ought to attend to quick as the land opens on the 1st of June and all the choice land will soon be taken up or send some friend a Power of Attorney so that he may administer on his Estate. You must excuse this part of the letter, it is not intended to hurt your feelings, but I do wish to see that the Martyrs to Liberty shall have their rights secured to their Parents or relatives. I expect that the journal you enquired about, fell also into the hands of the Mexicans, as I used to see him write in a large book. Before finishing, I will state, that he was wounded in the battle and afterwards led out with the balance of the officers and shot; There is another paper by a private who made his escape, of the names of the troops, which is very likely the way that you heard that your son was still alive, but I am sorry to say to the contrary. Any assistance I can render you in arranging your son's affairs, will be done with pleasure, by writing me, addressed to the care of Hon. Wm. S. Fisher, War Dept., Texas. I am out in the country trying to recover my health. I shall here conclude. Do sincerely sympathize with you in the loss of your son, who was an ornament to society. Answer to another question in his sister's letter: He had a Bible with him. In conclusion,

Your obt. servt.,

Jno. D. McLeod.

(Post Marked New Orleans Feb 6,)

10.

STAUNTON (VA.) SPECTATOR.

Thursday, May 19, 1836.

The Mexican official dispatches of the operations in Texas have reached this country, through the Vera Cruz and Metamoras

papers. Santa Anna states his column of attack, in the storming of the Alamo, at only 1400 men, and admits the loss of but 70 killed and 300 wounded. He states that he buried in the ditches, more than six hundred of the Texans. This is rather too much license for even Mexican grandiloquence. It is well known that Travis' forces did not exceed 180 men. He very probably buried as many as he reports, but, unquestionably, if he did, two-thirds of them, or more, were his own dead.

The *Nat. Intelligencer*, of Monday, infers, from the tenor of the despatches, that there is no truth in the report of the massacre of Fannin's battalion of three hundred men. We are sorry to say that an attentive perusal of the despatches of Gen. Urrea inspires no doubt of the kind, in our mind. This letter is dated on the 23d of March; one day after the surrender at discretion—terms having been refused, of Fannin. Now if the editors of the *Intelligencer* will turn to the account published in their own paper of the massacre, they will see that it is alleged to have taken place nine days after the surrender.—There is nothing, however, in the letters of the Mexican Generals, to weaken confidence in the truth of the horrible story.—It will be seen, by a paragraph in another column, that a subsequent fusilade has been perpetrated on a body of unarmed men, on their way, we presume, to join Houston.

ARENA.

STAUNTON SPECTATOR.

Thursday, June 2, 1836.

From the Louisville (Ky.) Jour. May 13.

Extracts of a letter from Chas. B. Shain, a youth of this city, who was taken with Col. Fanning, to his father, dated April 11, at Grover's [Groce's] Crossing, on the Brazos River:

"Dear Father.—I take this opportunity of writing you a few lines to let you know that I am in existence. I suppose you will have heard before this reaches you, that I was either taken prisoner or killed. I was taken prisoner on the 20th of last month, and kept a week, when all of us, who were taken with Col. Fanning, besides other prisoners, were ordered out to be shot, but I, with six others, out of five hundred and twenty-one, escaped. Before we were taken Col. Fanning's party had a battle with the Mexicans

in a large prairie, and killed and wounded, as the Mexicans themselves said, three hundred of them; but one of the Texans, who was a prisoner at the time, said that it took them all the night of the 19th to bury their dead, and that we must have killed and wounded something like eight hundred or a thousand.— Their force was nineteen hundred strong, ours, two hundred and fifty.

“The circumstances under which we were taken, are these: We were completely surrounded, without any provision or water, and in such a situation that we could not use our cannon; in consequence of which we thought it best to surrender on the terms offered to us—which were, to treat us as prisoners of war, and according to the rules of Christian war-fare. But how sadly we were deceived, the sequel will show:—after starving us a week, they ordered us out saying that we were going after beef, but when we had marched about a half a mile from the fort we were ordered to halt. The Mexicans marched all on one side of us, and took deliberate aim at us, but I, as you have seen, was fortunate enough to escape. I have however had monstrous hard times, having nothing to eat for five successive days and nights, but at length arrived safely here this morning, after a travel of two weeks through prairies and dangers, during which time I had some narrow escapes, especially the night before last on the line of the picket guards of the Mexican force, I was near being taken or killed.

“San Felipe is taken. The Mexicans are in Texas, but I think I shall live to see her free, notwithstanding. We have near 1500 men in camp, and expect to attack the enemy in a few days.

“I am well with the exception of very sore feet occasioned by walking through the prairies barefooted. Tomorrow I shall go over the river to a farm house to stay until I get entirely well, when I will try to avenge the death of some of my brave friends. All of my company were killed.

“Your affectionate son,

“Chas. B. Shain.”

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The following named persons under the command of Cols. Fanning and Ward, made their escape: Joseph Andrews (our informant) David Holt, Lewis Washington, — Dickson, Maurice Bullock, Samuel Hardaway, and Benjamin Mordecai, all Geor-

gians. Dr. Shackelford of Alabama, had his life spared, and is now in attendance upon the wounded Mexicans.—Georgia paper.

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Extract of a letter from a Mexican General to his wife, dated Goliad, March 27, 1836.

There are now in this place 250 prisoners awaiting their deaths as pirates and incendiaries, there being only two who did not participate in the latter crime. The images and saints in the church served them for fuel. There are in Gaudaloupe 100 other prisoners who were taken at La Vaca. There is as yet no intelligence from the Divisions which marched for the towns of Austin and Nacogdoches: but I will send you the first news that may come from that quarter.

This day, Palm Sunday, March 27. has been to me a season of heartfelt sorrow. At six in the morning the execution of 412 American prisoners was commenced and continued until eight, when the last of the number was shot. At eleven began the operation of burning the bodies. Who can tell when they will be consumed!! I assure you that the number of foreigners who have fallen in Texas during this campaign must exceed 1,000. We have still 80 of them left.

STAUNTON, VA., SPECTATOR.

Thursday, Aug. 11, 1836.

JOHN S. BROOKS.

The following letter from Capt. Shackelford renders it but too certain that our young friend, JOHN SOWERS BROOKS, has been numbered among the victims of Mexican perfidy, in the massacre of Col. Fannin's division. Indeed it seems to us, that there can no longer be a doubt as to his fate. Mr. Brooks was one of Col. Fannin's staff, and although there is a slight mistake in the name, it may have been typographical, or it may have been inadvertent in the writer. It is hardly probable however that there were two of Col. Fannin's staff whose names were so nearly alike. As to the impression that he had received a military education, it must have been an inference merely, from the fact of his superior

qualification. But there is still another circumstance to fix this belief in our mind. He is spoken of as being a native of one of the upper counties of Virginia. Here, there is no room for doubt. We are forced therefore to yield to the sad conviction that the gentleman of whom Capt. S. thus speaks is our friend. How painful the thought!! Had he died on the battle-field, the death which the soldier covets, our feelings would be different. But to have been dragged from his bed, suffering and exhausted from a wound received in battle, and butchered in cold blood in the street, harrows up every feeling of the soul, and fires us with indignation against his murderers.

Mr. Brooks was an inmate of this office, for nearly two years—We knew him well. His mind was of a very high order, and his feelings and principles were all elevated and noble. He embarked in the cause of Texas Independence at the first onset, and although but about twenty-two years of age, no man had obtained a higher reputation for usefulness and efficiency in the Texas army, than he. He was in fact, the soul of the division to which he belonged; and if his life had been spared, he must have risen to high distinction in the country of his adoption.

But—he is gone! His gallant spirit has fled forever. His career, though brief has been brilliant—and the name of Brooks will be hallowed in the annals of Texas.

With his family, we are sure the whole community will sympathize in their affliction.—None knew the noble youth, who did not love him, and all must lament the bloody tragedy which has extinguished at once so many bright endowments and glowing anticipations. Mr. Spahn, of New Orleans, who was spared to attend the wounded Mexicans, states these as the particulars of Captain Brooks' death, who, we have no doubt, is the same.—Other accounts represent him as having been wounded in the battle which preceded the surrender.

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Tuscumbia, July 16.

While here Dr. Shackelford furnished us with a very interesting sketch pertaining to the campaign, and has promised, as will be seen, a detail more complete hereafter.—NORTH ALABAMIAN.

## THE RED ROVERS.

To the Editors of the North Alabamian:

Sirs: As everything in relation to the fall of this unfortunate but gallant little band, will be acceptable to their friends, I have made out a list below (from memory) of those who were absent during the engagement, those wounded in the action, those who escaped the massacre, and those who were massacred. I intend in a short time to give a full account of the battle, and will then speak of the whole corps engaged.

At the time of the attack, we were in an open prairie, drawn up in a hollow square, numbering about two hundred and seventy-five effective men. The force of the enemy must have been at least five hundred cavalry and fifteen hundred infantry,—that with this disparity of force, we fought for about three hours—repelling charge after charge, and mowing large numbers of the enemy in every attempt made upon our lines, until they were finally driven from the contest, and compelled to take refuge in the very timber which we had endeavored to reach ourselves. Our whole loss was seven killed, and between forty and fifty wounded, some mortally. I have frequently been asked why we did not retreat that night? In answer to this inquiry, I will remark that the night was dark and gloomy, that we had no way of taking off our wounded, except upon our backs, and that we were determined never to abandon them to the mercy of the enemy. In addition to this, we had repelled every charge made upon us, and compelled the enemy to seek safety in retreat, and we anxiously looked for a reinforcement in the morning, when we expected to consummate our victory. The fatal morning however arrived, and instead of being reinforced ourselves, the enemy received a large accession to their force, and opened upon us with a piece of artillery. We were suffering greatly from the want of water, and there was no alternative left us but to abandon our wounded, and cut our way through the enemy, or to make an honorable capitulation. A flag was sent out and promptly met by the enemy, who offered the following terms:

1st. That we should be received as prisoners of war, and be treated with every mark of kindness which is extended to prisoners by the most civilized nations of the world.



2nd. That private property should, in every instance, be respected, and that the arms of the officers should be given up to them upon their exchange or parole.

3rd. That the prisoners should be exchanged or sent to the United States upon their parole, so soon as a conveyance could be procured. This was signed in the most formal manner, and the most solemn assurances given, that it would be scrupulously observed. The bloody massacre which followed, will show how far confidence can be reposed in the honor of a Mexican officer.

My life was spared, not from any feeling of humanity towards me, but from a necessity, for my services in their hospital: the same may be said of Drs. Barnard and Field. I was detained at La Bahia (Goliad) for about four weeks, where my sufferings were almost insupportable, and then sent to St. Antonio in company with Dr. Barnard to visit their wounded at that place, who had been very badly attended to. We remained there, being required to attend their hospital, until all their force (but one company) had commenced their retreat. We then procured horses and other means through the assistance of some confidential friends, and made off, passing the Mexican Army in the night.

While at St. Antonio, I take much pleasure in stating that I was treated with great kindness by a majority of the Mexican officers, and by the citizens generally—that I frequently heard the massacre of Fannin's army spoken of. The officers declared that the bloody order emanated from Santa Anna; that it was in violation of a solemn capitulation, and in opposition to the advice of nearly all the field officers.

In addition to the fate of the Red Rovers, I will mention two gallant young men who were attached to the staff of Col. Fannin, John L. Brooks and ——— Chadwick. They were both highly gifted young men, and had received a military education. Brooks was a native of one of the upper counties of Virginia, and Chadwick of the State of New Hampshire, though for the last few years a resident of Illinois: The former received a wound during the engagement. They both shared the fate of many other gallant spirits.

In the subjoined list, those marked "w" were, some slightly and others severely wounded, though not in the hospital.

Those marked "w,h," were wounded and in the hospital, and all massacred in the fort. The residue, not accounted for, were marched out of the fort, under pretext of going to Copano to be exchanged, and all fired upon without the least intimation of their fate.

Yours ob't

Jack Shackleford,  
Late Captain Red Rovers.